Complaints filed about Durham developer’s super PAC

The News & Observer (Raleigh, North Carolina)

May 1, 2012 Tuesday

Length: 544 words

Byline: Virginia Bridges

Correspondent

Dateline: ***DURHAM***

Body

Durham County’s first ***super*** ***PAC*** already faces scrutiny after the local Board of Elections received ***complaints*** of inappropriate coordination with candidates.

Director of Elections Michael Perry forwarded to the State Board of Elections ***about*** eight ***complaints*** claiming county commissioner candidates Rickey Padgett and incumbents Joe Bowser and Brenda Howerton illegally coordinated with the The ***Durham*** Partnership for Progress.

The ***super*** ***PAC***, backed by Southern ***Durham*** Development, has mailed out glossy fliers endorsing Bowser, Howerton and Padgett, along with incumbent commissioners Chairman Michael Page.

Bowser, Padgett and Southern ***Durham*** Development President Alex Mitchell denied coordinating or even communicating with each other. Efforts to reach Howerton on Monday were unsuccessful.

All of the candidates support Southern ***Durham*** Development’s controversial 751 South, a 1,300-home, mixed-use project proposed for southwest ***Durham*** County near Jordan Lake.

Technically called an “Independent Expenditure Political Committee,” ***super*** PACs are prohibited from, directly or indirectly, making contributions to candidate committees or other groups that make contributions to candidates, according to the N.C. State Board of Elections.

The ***complaints*** concern witness by witnesses that Padgett and representatives of Bowser and Howerton distributed the ***Super*** ***PAC***’s fliers at early-voting sites over the weekend.

Perry indicated in an email that he spoke with a Howerton supporter on Saturday who was passing out the ***super*** ***PAC*** literature.

“My opinion was that if he was here specifically to support Brenda with literature from the ***PAC*** there did appear to be some degree of coordination,” Perry wrote in an email.

The ***complaints*** also indicated Bowser and Howerton each provided transportation for a ***super*** ***PAC*** poll worker. Bowser said the worker that witnesses identified as a ***super*** ***PAC*** worker actually worked for him on behalf of the ***Durham*** Committee on the Affairs of Black People.

Mitchell said the allegations are "totally false" but expected from political opponents. The ***super*** ***PAC*** has gone beyond what the law requires by not communicating with the candidates it supports, including not informing them of the fliers.

Bowser said many of the ***complaints*** came from volunteers working the early-voting sites for the ***Durham*** People's Alliance, which opposes the 751 South development.

"No doubt ***about*** it, (the ***complaints***) are politically motivated," Bowser said.

Don Moffitt, who reported an alleged violation that he observed while volunteering for the People's Alliance, said individuals did not report violations until they saw a trend.

"It was just a group of people who were working the polls, making observations that it looks like something is going on here and it shouldn't be going on," Moffitt said.

So far, Southern ***Durham*** Development has spent $54,000 to promote the four county commissioner candidates through the ***super*** ***PAC***, but no the money had gone to poll workers, Southern ***Durham*** Development representatives said.

According to a ***PAC*** report ***filed*** Monday, the company donated $50,000 for services from Nexus Strategies, a Raleigh political consulting firm. Other expenses included marketing and website expenses. Staff writer Jim Wise contributed.

Bridges: 919-564-9330

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Publication-Type: Newspaper

Subject: ELECTION AUTHORITIES (92%); ELECTIONS (90%); CAMPAIGNS & ELECTIONS (90%); VOTERS & VOTING (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); US STATE GOVERNMENT (89%); COUNTIES (89%); COUNTY GOVERNMENT (89%); POLITICAL DONATIONS & FUNDRAISING (89%); POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEES (78%); PLATFORMS & ISSUES (78%); SUITS & CLAIMS (77%); MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS (76%); WRITERS (70%); CORPORATE GIVING (68%)

Industry: MIXED USE DEVELOPMENTS (76%); WRITERS (70%); CONSULTING SERVICES (69%)

Person: MICHAEL W PERRY (79%)

Geographic: ***DURHAM***, NC, USA (91%); RALEIGH, NC, USA (59%); NORTH CAROLINA, USA (79%)

Load-Date: August 8, 2012

End of Document